

Embedding the research method within information science practice: approaches to PhD level research in the workplace

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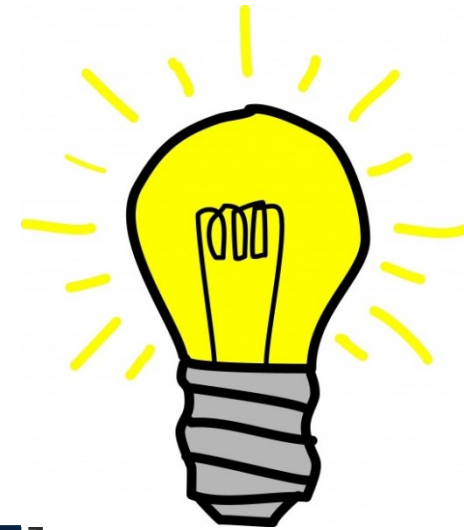
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Introduction...

- Contextualising information science research within practice
 - Importance in plugging gaps that academia does not see
 - Strategic thinking about research in the workplace
- Maturity models for practitioner research
- Developing a 'permanent research' philosophy
- Considering formal routes to PhD level work
- Relativism!

Research in the workplace

- Workplace creativity a key driver of organizational innovation, novelty and achievement
- ‘Employee-driven innovation’ (EDI) [\[1\]](#)
- Informing organizational decision making
- Building knowledge capacity (the knowledge org.)
- Fallacy of ‘scientific knowledge’ in the workplace [\[5\]](#)
 - Practitioner as mere ‘consumer of scientific knowledge’ promulgated by academia
 - Failure of academia to address real practitioner problems
 - Overestimation of the applicability of academic research in practitioner contexts [\[4\]](#)
 - Communication breakdown?! Semantic drifting?! Research-to-practice disconnection?!

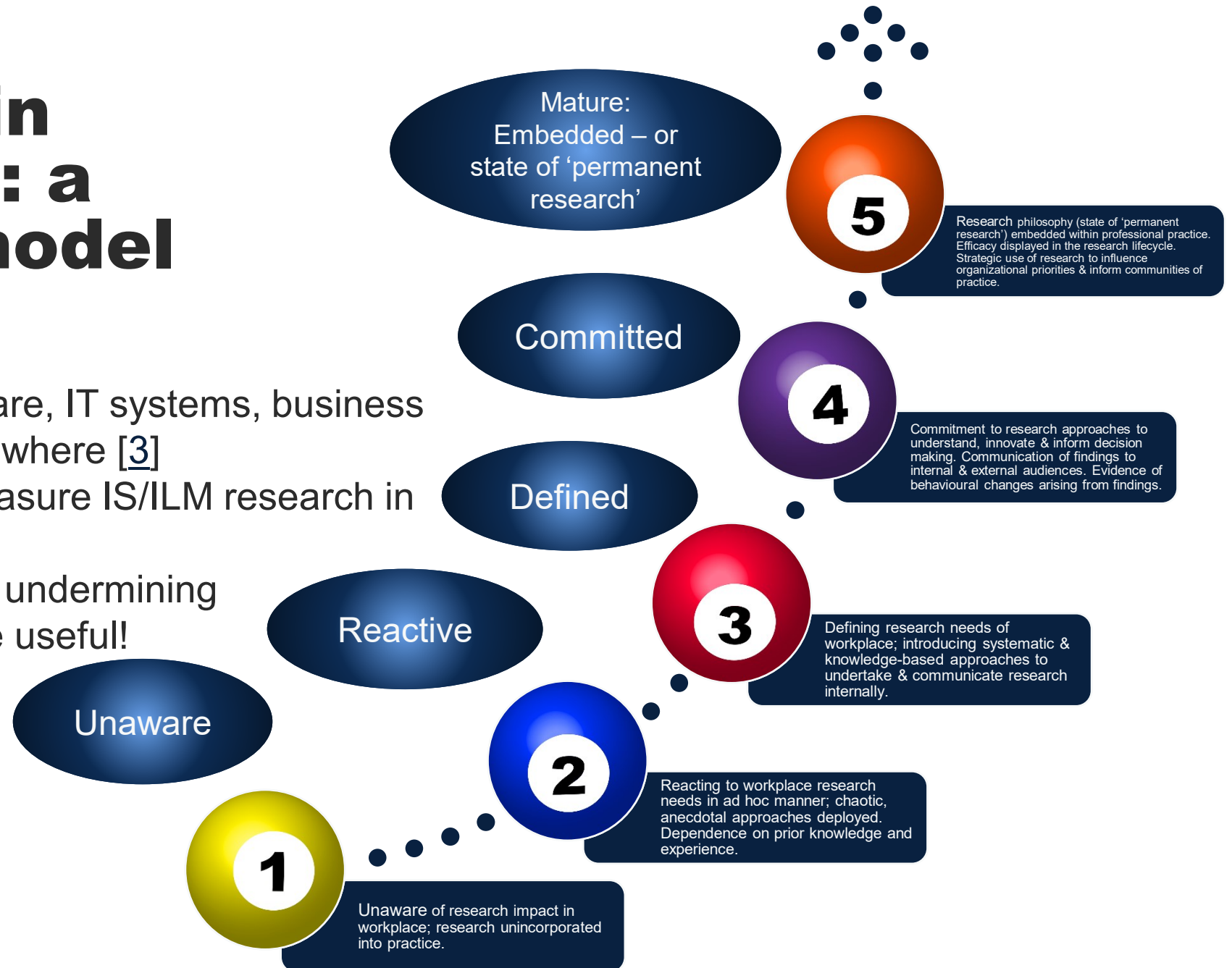


Research maturity needed

- Problems at the academic side of research; *but...*
- Need for research maturity in workplace:
 - Randomness of day-to-day practitioner problem-solving
 - Lack of documentation in approaches or analysis
 - Lack of formal approaches adopted
- Press **<pause> --- <Breathe deeply> !**
- Switch to strategic, planned, deliberate approaches

Research in workplace: a maturity model

- 'Maturity models'...
- Popular tool in software, IT systems, business
 - Cropping up elsewhere [3]
- Conceptualise or measure IS/ILM research in the workplace
- Understanding, **NOT** undermining
- Research of any type useful!

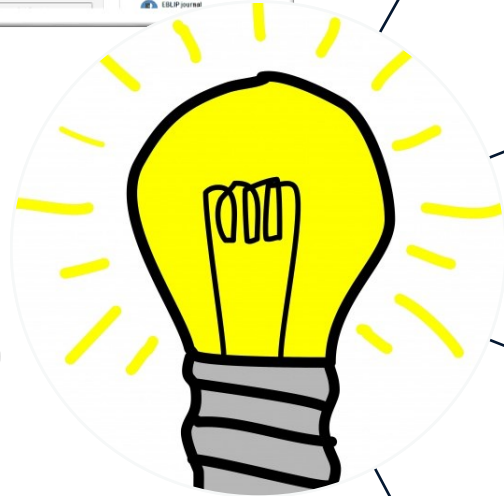
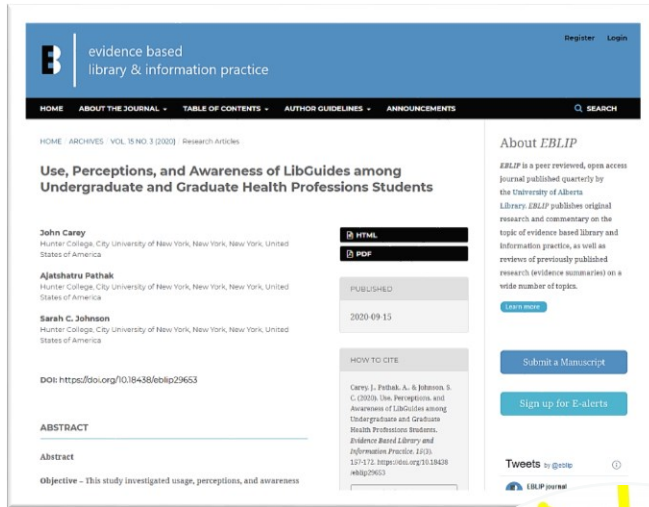


‘Permanent research’ philosophy



[Honoré Daumier](#) of the [French Revolution of 1848](#) – CC0

- Adopting permanent research – you don't need to be a Trotskyist!
- Permanent research ≠ Permanent revolution 😊
 - Holistic approach to research in workplace
 - Embedding research philosophy into practice & making time
 - Linking and aligning with organization objectives
 - Factoring research into project planning
 - Acceptance that most problems are not as simple as one might think
- Striving for superior understanding; decisions based on evidence; persuading and influencing
 - Or, getting your way?! ;-)
- Cultivating research mind-set among colleagues
- Career benefits and kudos
- Publications...?



Reflect & question

Plan & organize

Execute

Communicate

- Reflect on efficacy of any change to current practice or evaluate existing process
- Hypothesise! Do we need to improve our understanding of impacts? Locally, externally, or both?
- Consult literature, often outside ILM/IS

- Plan; adopt a structured research approach
- Research questions?
- Which research methods or methodologies? Feasibility?
- Resisting temptation to cut corners; rigour!
- Remember, breathe!
- Consider nature of data & analysis, & management
- Consider timescales & protracted data collection – also ethics?

- Design & deployment of research instruments – or launching of experiment
- Data gathering & analysis – patience may be required here
- Negative findings
- Preparing for data sharing

- To whom should we communicate? Internal, external, or both – or not at all?
- Research limitations
- Emergence of extensive strand of enquiry?
- Selecting journals / conferences
- Open scholarship – leading from the front



Harnessing permanent research

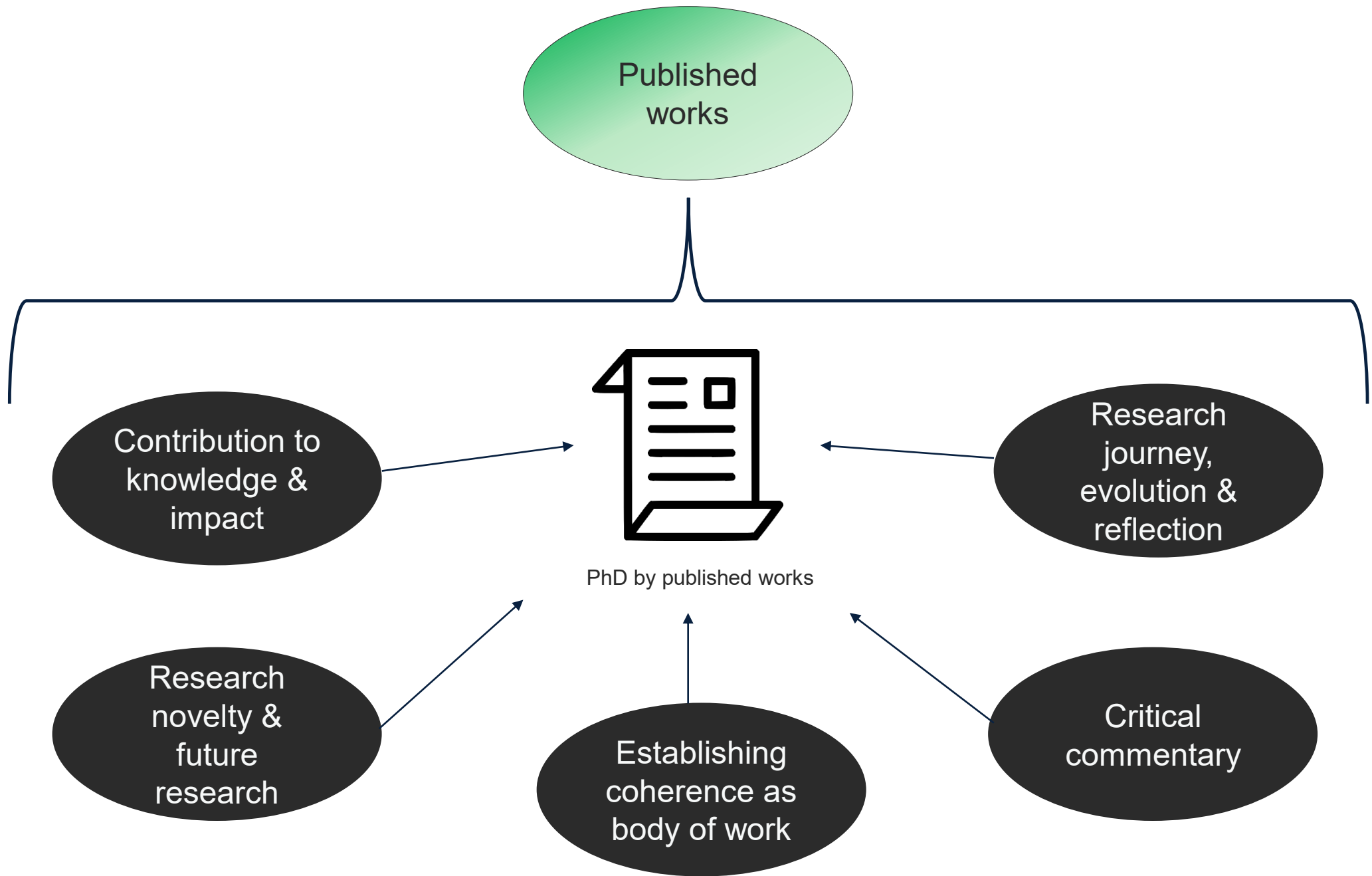
- Publications
 -not forgetting organizational innovation and the broader objectives of the permanent research philosophy
 - Practice makes perfect!
 - Influencing practice in the sector
- Identifying the research threads
 - Themes, ongoing research questions, 'reaching for truth'...
 - Establishing the trajectory for future research
 - Observing a coherence in your research....?
- Going beyond: the PhD?
 - Traditional doctorates vs. ???

PhD by published works

- PhD 'by publication'
 - Evolving nature of doctorates
 - Harnessing those threads and coherence!
 - Can be a superior approach to PhD level research
 - Could have planned it that way after all
 - Take the long view....
- But what is it?
 - Collection of published works, usually with a common theme, accompanied by....
 - Substantial thesis/critical appraisal (40,000-60,000 words)
 - Prima-facie (1,000-5,000 words)
 - Formal thesis submission and a viva voce

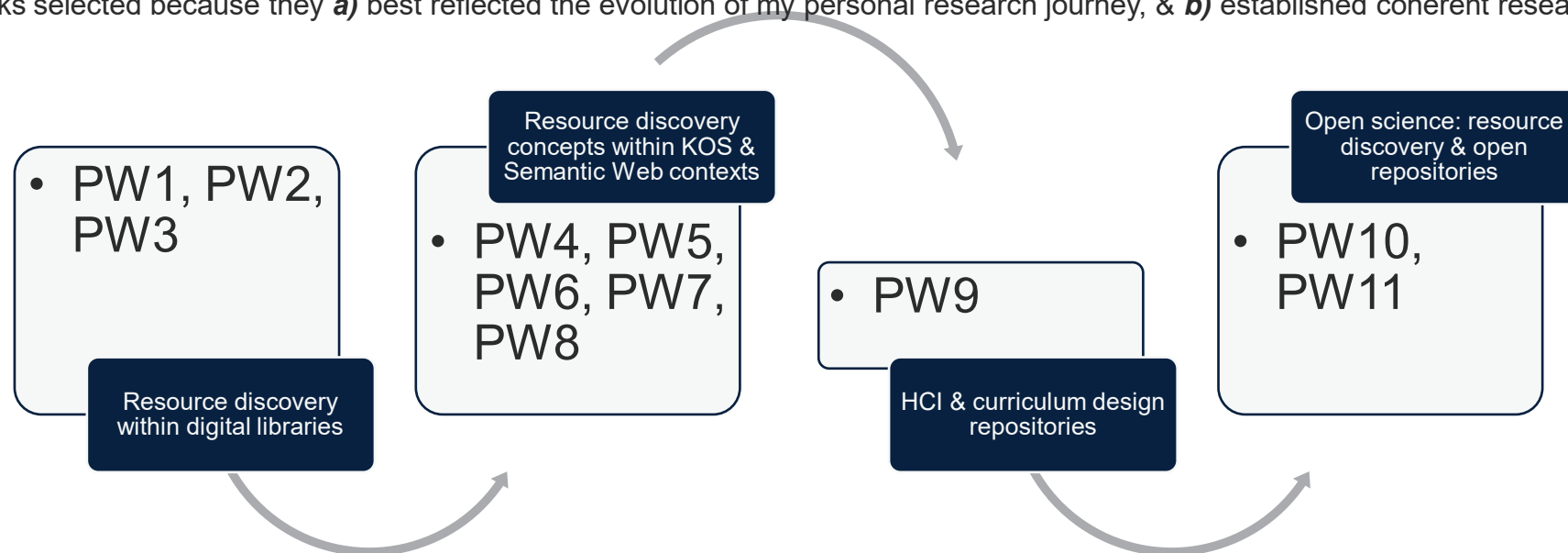


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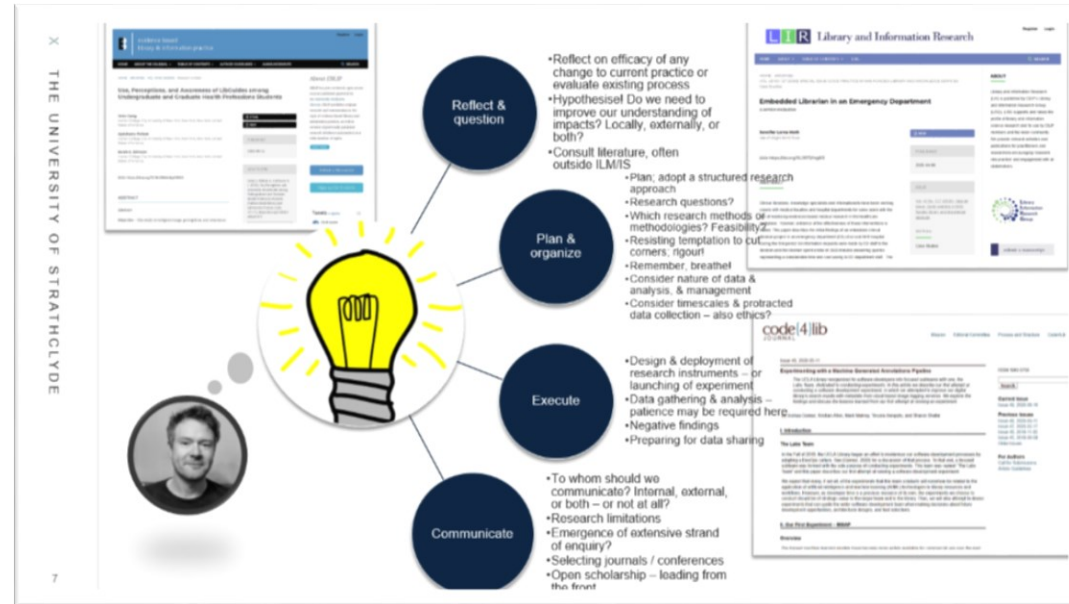


PhD: A personal anatomy...

- 11 assembled works united in exploration of topics surrounding resource discovery
 - *Resource discovery* the defining narrative throughout my research career
 - Works grouped into one of the four resource discovery themes
- Selected works charted my personal research 'journey'
- Works selected because they **a)** best reflected the evolution of my personal research journey, & **b)** established coherent research narrative



...but start at the beginning



- Pursue a 'permanent research' ethos first and foremost
- Reflect & question, plan & organize, execute, & communicate
- Success can be a barometer of where to go travel to next!

Conclusion

- **Sector requires more research and greater maturity**
 - Organizationally but also to move the discipline forward – step up to the plate!
 - Jettison ‘hash bash’, reactive research – plot yourself on the maturity model – and embrace the research method
 - Embrace a ‘permanent research’ ethos which seeks to align research with organizational or team objectives to earn the gift of time
 - Consider all change ripe for research and analysis
 - Look for coherence emerging in research communications and thinking
 - Evidence of a programme of doctorate level work?

References

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